

13.0 Safety

It is essential for the City of Mesa to ensure that the residents of Mesa enjoy not only a quality, but also a safe environment. In the event of a natural disaster or man-made emergency, the City is prepared to respond immediately to protect citizens, property, and businesses in the best manner possible. The Safety Element addresses the goals, objectives and policies necessary to provide a comprehensive program to deal with local, area-wide, regional and national emergencies.



13.1 Background

The City maintains an evacuation plan, emergency water supplies, communications for provision of emergency health care, law enforcement, disaster relief, roadway standards for emergency vehicles, building standards to facilitate emergency equipment and crews, and mapping to respond to and mitigate hazards that may be the result of a large-scale emergency or disaster.

This element of the Mesa General Plan addresses a variety of emergencies relating to both the natural environment and man-made environment that may impact Mesa. It does not address the on-going activities of police, fire, and emergency medical agencies, because these services are beyond the scope of this element.

13.1.1 Environmental Hazards

The City of Mesa, both internally and in cooperation with the Flood Control District of Maricopa County, has carefully documented floodplain areas and has planned for future protective facilities. Eastern Maricopa County may be prone to severe weather and sudden heavy rainfall that often results in flash floods. Other flooding conditions may occur in the vicinity of the Salt River, north of the City boundaries, which drains both the Salt and Verde watersheds. Flood control projects along with conservation activities in the floodplains, as designated by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and other flood control activities have greatly improved the safety of the environment along the Salt River north of Mesa, as well as within the City itself.

It is also important that the emergency planning activities address rare and unforeseen events that could be the result of other natural disasters such as tornados, earthquakes, large brush fires and other potentially large-scale disasters.

13.1.2 Man Made Hazards

The Falcon Field Airport Land Use Guidelines (1994), the Williams Gateway Area Plan (1996), and the Williams Gateway Airport Part 150 Study (2000) each outline potential noise and safety considerations for these extremely important areas within the City of Mesa. It is important to consider these plans and update them to assure that the City has an up-to-date guideline for addressing related issues. These plans identify noise contours for 60 and 65 decibel noise disturbances that may occur on a regular basis, which designate no or limited residential development. However, areas lying outside these zones, which are under the flight path of aircraft, require aviation easements on homebuyer notification documents regarding aircraft noise potential.

An increased awareness of the hazardous man-made industrial and other processes has led to a series of planning efforts to protect citizens from accidental releases of hazardous chemicals. These planning efforts may be traced to environmental and emergency planning laws based on the Federal Emergency Planning and Community Right to Know Law. This law also provides for information to be available to citizens in regard to hazardous chemicals that are in their community. According to this law, the City of Mesa networks with the State and Local Emergency Planning Agencies and the Maricopa County Local Emergency Planning Committee to develop emergency response plans for such disasters.

It is very important to be prepared for the results of a terrorist attack or act of war. Based on recent acts of terrorism relating to airports and governmental sites, we must again be prepared for the possibility of man-made emergencies. Therefore, any emergency planning needs to meet all federal, state and local laws in terms for this type of emergency, and have in place plans to guide us through evacuation, hazard identification, medical assistance, law enforcement, disaster relief and mitigation related to a community scale act of violence.

It is very important that the factors and policies in this element are included in the process of evaluating major land use issues. Future residents of Mesa should enjoy not only a quality, but also a safe urban environment.

13.1.3 Existing Emergency Preparedness Planning

Currently, the City of Mesa works closely with the Flood Control District of Maricopa County, Maricopa County Department of Emergency Services, the State of Arizona Division of Emergency Management, FEMA and other agencies to provide emergency and disaster planning. Hazardous materials mapping and response is networked with all levels of government from the City of Mesa Fire Department through the Maricopa County Local Emergency Planning Committee, and Arizona Emergency Response Commission. Through a network that is dedicated to responding to emergencies, and a comprehensive

emergency management program coordinated through the Mesa Fire Department, the City is ready to address disasters of any size to protect its population.

As urban development continues in Mesa, it becomes even more important to consider the potential impacts to existing and future residents by noise, floods, and other natural influences. Such factors are primarily negative impacts and are critical during the analysis of specific rezoning requests.

13.2 Goals, Objectives, and Policies

Goal S-1

Provide for a safe environment to protect citizens, property, and businesses from natural or man-made hazards.

Objective S-1.1 Ensure that the residents of Mesa are adequately protected from potential injury and damage resulting from natural, technological and man-made hazards through the development of the City of Mesa Emergency Operations Plan in accordance with Arizona state law.

Policy S-1.1a Develop guidelines to mitigate the risks and potential adverse impacts associated with natural and man-made hazards.

Policy S-1.1b Implement the existing plan covering emergency evacuation procedures in the event they are required.

Policy S-1.1c Recognize and protect floodplain areas as identified by the Flood Control District of Maricopa County and implement their recommendations wherever possible.

Policy S-1.1d Encourage development on hillsides that minimizes potential erosion and prevents geologic instability.

Policy S-1.1e Consider the issue of public safety as a factor of neighborhood development and redevelopment.

Policy S-1.1f Develop plans and strategies for protecting citizens in the event of an act of terrorism or large-scale emergency.

Policy S-1.1g Develop plans and strategies for protecting citizens in the event of an accidental chemical release, industrial related or other similar emergency identified by the Federal Emergency Planning and Community Right to Know Law (SARA Title III).

Objective S-1.2 Promote the public health and safety in the vicinity of the Williams Gateway Airport and Falcon Field by operating the airports, where feasible, to minimize exposure to noise levels generated by airport operations.

Policy S-1.2a Prohibit residential development within the 65 day-night average sound level zone of the airports.

Policy S-1.2b For any sale, offer for sale, rent/lease or subdivision of residential property in the vicinity of Williams Gateway Airport or Falcon Field provide notification or disclosure that the site may be subject to aircraft noise that is objectionable.

Policy S-1.2c Continue to monitor development to protect the airspace around Falcon Field Airport and Williams Gateway, particularly in those areas where noise contours are 65 DNL or greater.

Objective S-1.3 Ensure that new development meets state-of-the-art standards for providing emergency access and evacuation capabilities.

Policy S-1.3a Require all new subdivisions to provide adequate access and roadway widths to provide access for emergency vehicles to all occupied, or potentially occupied parcels.

Policy S-1.3b Provide for citywide transportation system to provide optimal evacuation procedures in the event of a local or community-wide disaster.

Policy S-1.3c Ensure that buildings are properly equipped with fire suppression, communications and other emergency systems to minimize loss of life and property in the event of an emergency or disaster.

Goal S-2

Provide emergency evacuation, response, medical support, and mitigation in the event of a terrorist attack, act of war, or use of weapons of mass destruction.

Objective S-2.1 Provide assistance to assist and aid citizens in the event of a man-made emergency that disturbs peaceful state of the community from the global perspective.

Policy S-2.1a Provide emergency planning that meets all federal, state, and local laws and guidelines.

Policy S-2.1b Provide for evacuation, hazard identification, medical assistance, law enforcement, disaster relief and mitigation related to a community scale act of violence.

14.0 Plan Administration

The elements of the General Plan describe the vision, goals, objectives, and policies that will guide the future development of the community. These provisions will be effective only if the plan is properly administered and implemented. Special attention must be paid to the strategy for implementing the plan's provisions, providing for appropriate amendments, and maintaining the validity of the plan through periodic updates. The purpose of this section is to describe the manner in which these three needs will be met.



14.1 Implementation of the General Plan

Arizona state law requires that the municipal planning agency take the following actions to implement the General Plan:

- Recommend measures to the City Council that will put into effect the provisions of the General Plan.
- Report annually to the City Council on the status of the plan and the progress in its implementation.
- Provide for the promotion of public interest in and understanding of the General Plan and its associated regulations.
- Communicate with other officials, agencies, and organizations with regard to the implementation of the plan.

The goals, objectives, policies, and other provisions of the General Plan elements provide the direction for achieving the desired future development of the community. A variety of tools will be used in the implementation of these provisions. These tools and strategies are described below.

14.1.1 Implementation Tools

The following tools will be used to assist in the implementation of the General Plan.

Zoning Ordinance

The zoning ordinance describes the permitted development on each privately owned parcel of property. The ordinance establishes permitted land uses and the appropriate location, size, and height of structures, among other factors. The intent of the ordinance is to provide minimum requirements in support of the General Plan. The existing City of Mesa Zoning Ordinance establishes twenty-five zoning and seven overlay district categories to regulate residential, employment, and supportive land uses. Additional regulations within these districts are also delineated.

State statutes require that all adopted zoning and rezoning ordinances be consistent with the adopted General Plan. The Land Use Map in the Land Use Element of this General Plan indicates the intended future function, density, and characteristic use of the land. In general, the plan does not address small-scale situations, specific characteristics of residential development, or the specific types of commercial and other non-residential uses. The boundaries between use and density designations on the map are not fixed precisely. Rather, they indicate general areas where the goals in the plan will be pursued through more detailed planning decisions. Where uncertainty exists with regard to the relationship of the designated land uses to specific parcels, the City Planning Director will interpret the intent of the General Plan. A landowner may request a review of this interpretation by the Planning and Zoning Board.

Subdivision Regulations

Subdivision Regulations govern the procedures and requirements under which property may be subdivided for development. They include design standards, engineering requirements, and utility provisions. These regulations provide that property offered for sale has all of the provisions for quality development. They also help ensure that future public costs are minimized by requiring the installation of high quality improvements.

Design Guidelines

Design Guidelines provide a framework for evaluating new development proposals on the basis of design, architecture, compatibility, landscaping, and other factors.

Capital Improvements Program

The Capital Improvements Program describes the location and timing of needed public facilities. It sets the priorities and funding for these projects over a five-year period. In addition to providing the needed public infrastructure, the Capital Improvements Program can guide the location of new private development by controlling the timing and placement of the required public improvements.

Municipal Budget

The Municipal Budget directs the expenditures of the City each year. Operating under State spending limitations and the available tax revenues, the budget sets priorities for activities and projects. These funding decisions have a significant impact on the future development of Mesa.

Annexation Guidelines

The City's annexation policies describe the location and timing of the inclusion of additional property within its corporate limits. Annexation provides the advantages of City services to the property owner. In combination with policies regarding the provision of utilities, annexation decisions can be an effective growth management tool.

Utility Service Policies

These policies govern the location and conditions for the provision of utility extensions and hookups to municipal systems beyond City limits. By regulating the placement of utilities, these policies can measurably affect the location and timing of development.

Functional Plans

Several plans exist that contain specific provisions related to various functions of the City. These plans provide details related to the general direction and policies described in the elements of the General Plan. They contain actions, cost analyses, and other provisions that will assist in the implementation of the provisions of the General Plan. While the General Plan sets the direction, these plans provide the methods and means for realizing the goals and objectives. Three of these plans – Transportation Master Plan, Parks and Recreation Master Plan, and Economic Development Strategy - have been prepared concurrently with, but separately from, this General Plan. Others will be formulated as a result of policies contained in the General Plan.

The functional plans that will assist in the implementation of the General Plan include those summarized below. These plans must be approved by the City Council prior to their implementation.

Transportation Master Plan

The Transportation Master Plan, which was approved by Resolution #7866 of the City Council on June 24, 2002, provides the details for implementing the goals, objectives, and policies contained in the Transportation Element of the General Plan. It describes the existing and future transportation conditions in the City of Mesa. Detailed descriptions of needs and costs are provided for the street

system, public transportation, bicycles, pedestrians, the downtown area, and transportation demand management. The Transportation Master Plan also describes the current and potential funding sources to meet the capital, operations, and maintenance needs of the City.

Parks and Recreation Master Plan

The Parks and Recreation Master Plan, which was approved by the City Council on August 5, 2002, provides the details for implementing the goals, objectives, and policies of the Parks, Recreation, and Open Space Element. It identifies the needs for the various types and sizes of parks and open spaces and describes the required acquisition of land to accommodate these needs. Detailed descriptions are included of management standards and systems, equitable access to facilities, the creation of lifetime users, revenue generation, information technology, partnerships with other entities, and marketing and communications.

Economic Development Strategy

The Economic Development Strategy, which was approved by the City Council on June 20, 2002, provides the details for implementing the goals, objectives, and policies of the Economic Development Element. It identifies the competitive advantages of the City and region and describes economic activity targets. The strategy includes the definition of program initiatives and recommendations for achieving the economic development goals and objectives. Also included are performance measures to assess the effectiveness of the programs.

Housing Master Plan

The Housing Element of the General Plan provides for the preparation of a Housing Master Plan for the City. This plan will provide the details for the implementation of the goals, objectives, and policies of the Housing Element. It will be based on current and appropriate data and will outline specific implementation measures.

Mesa Town Center Concept Plan

The Mesa Town Center Concept Plan, which was approved by Resolution #7453 of the City Council on December 20, 1999, provides for the implementation of the goals, objectives, and policies in the General Plan with regard to the Town Center Area. The Town Center Plan identifies the types of land uses in this area that reflect the unique character of Mesa's Town Center. It establishes land use relationships centered around the heart of downtown that support mixed-use development, bus and future light rail service, government facilities, and pedestrian linkages. The guiding philosophy of the Concept Plan is the development of Town Center into an urban village supported by residential development, private and public employment, land cultural arts and entertainment specialty retail.

Historic Preservation Plan

The Mesa Historic Preservation Plan, which was approved by Resolution #7829 of the City Council on May 6, 2002, provides for the implementation of the goals, objectives, and policies of the General Plan with regard to the preservation of the historic resources of the City. This plan seeks to provide consistency among the City's policies that affect the community's cultural resources and to improve coordination among City departments in achieving historic preservation goals. The plan summarizes information about the historic resources of Mesa and estimates the growth of the historic resource population over the next 25 years. It also addresses threats to archaeological and historic resources, states goals for the historic preservation program, and describes implementation recommendations.

Sub-Area and Neighborhood Plans

Sub-Area and Neighborhood Plans provide a framework for future decision-making for selected small geographic areas within the community. They contain statements of principles to be followed, recommendations for strategies to achieve desired goals and objectives, and a plan of action to guide future land use development in the area. Prepared with substantial public involvement, these plans represent the consensus of the residents.

Other Plans

Other plans related to the ongoing operations of the City will also assist in the implementation of the stated goals and objectives. The General Plan provides the context and direction for the preparation of these plans. The implementation of these plans will provide the means of realizing the related policies that are contained in the General Plan.

14.1.2 Implementation Strategies

Within the framework of the implementation tools described above, specific implementation strategies have been formulated that related to the elements of the General Plan. These strategies provide additional details concerning the actions that will be needed to implement the provisions of the elements. In some cases, the measure stated is the implementation of a particular master plan. These master plans contain the detailed strategies and actions. The implementation framework is described below under the following headings:

- Strategy – A brief description of the action strategy.
- Element – The element of the General Plan to which the action strategy relates.
- Time Frame – The target time within which the action strategy will occur.
- Responsibility – The agency or department with the primary responsibility for accomplishing the action strategy.

Strategy	Element	Time-Frame (Years)	Responsibility
Prepare revisions to the Zoning Ordinance and Official Map to ensure conformity with the General Plan	Land Use	1-10	Planning Division
Prepare Design Standards for residential, commercial, and employment land uses for areas not currently covered by existing guidelines and standards	Land Use	1-5	Planning Division
Develop land use intensity guidelines for the land use categories of neighborhood, community, and regional commercial. Identify uses of size and intensity appropriate for each category. Integrate pedestrian, bicycle, transit, and vehicular access into each commercial theme.	Land Use	1-5	Planning Division
Consider a policy on granting residential and commercial density credits for public area improvements.	Land Use	1-10	Planning Division
Prepare sub-area plans for the Mesa Grande Sub-Area, Central Broadway Sub-Area, Williams Gateway Sub-Area, Falcon Field Sub-Area, Desert Uplands Sub-Area, Lehi Sub-Area, and Citrus Sub-Area. Include in these plans specific strategies for their implementation.	Land Use Economic Development Growth Areas Revitalization & Redevelop. Housing	1-5	Planning Division Neighborhood Services
Develop an infill incentive program to enhance sub-areas and other identified areas, where vacant and underused parcels of property may be used to improve livability and economic vitality.	Land Use Economic Development Growth Areas Revitalization & Redevelop.	1-5	Planning Division Neighborhood Services

Strategy	Element	Time-Frame (Years)	Responsibility
Use Planned Area Development (PAD) techniques through the Zoning Ordinance to preserve the character of sub-areas as necessary to encourage innovative design and flexibility in projects	Land Use	1-10	Planning Division
Implement the detailed provisions of the Transportation Master Plan. Include all transportation modes.	Transportation	1-10	Transportation Division
Conduct a detailed study to identify the most appropriate investment for transit funding. Include the consideration of short and long-term expansions to neighborhood, local, regional, and commuter services.	Transportation	1-5	Transportation Division
Continue to link the completion of the transportation system to community growth, develop connectivity between modes, and provide seamless service with adjacent communities.	Transportation Land Use	1-10	Transportation Division Planning Division
Implement the detailed provisions of the Economic Development Strategy.	Economic Development	1-10	Economic Development
Coordinate capital improvement projects with the needs in the designated growth areas.	Growth Areas	1-10	Development Services
Implement the Town Center Concept and Action Plan	Land Use Economic Development Growth Areas Revitalization & Redevelop.	1-10	Redevelopment
Prepare a Housing Master Plan that is consistent with the Housing Element of the General Plan. Include analysis of housing trends, consideration of inclusionary/incentive zoning, evaluation of City ordinances and policies, evaluation of funding sources, and consideration of public/private partnerships	Housing	1-5	Neighborhood Services

Strategy	Element	Time-Frame (Years)	Responsibility
Consider modifications to the Zoning Ordinance, Subdivision Regulations, Landscape Ordinance, and companion codes to implement the policies of the Housing Element and the provisions of the Housing Master Plan.	Housing	1-5	Planning Division Neighborhood Services
Formalize a resident-driven, City-assisted neighborhood planning process. Identify funding and technical resources to create workable plans.	Housing		Planning Division Neighborhood Services
Implement the provisions of the Parks and Recreation Master Plan	Parks, Recreation, & Open Space	1-10	Parks and Recreation Division
Complete and maintain an Emergency Response and Recovery Plan	Safety	1-5	

14.2 Amendments to the General Plan

By State Statute (ARS 9-461.06.G), a Major Amendment to the General Plan is any development proposal that would result in a change to the land use plan that would substantially alter the City's planned mixture or balance of land uses. The following definitions, administrative process, and approval requirements apply to all applications for Major Amendments.

14.2.1 Major Amendment Definition

A Major Amendment to the General Plan is defined as any proposal that meets any of the following criteria.

1. Any change in a residential land use classification of 40 or more contiguous acres to another land use classification.
2. Any change in a non-residential land use classification of 20 or more contiguous acres to a residential land use classification.
3. Any proposal that in the aggregate includes changes in land use classification of more than 320 acres described in this General Plan.
4. Any modification or elimination of a planned freeway, expressway, parkway, or limited access arterial street shown in this General Plan.

14.2.2 Major Amendment Administrative Process

The following administrative process will be used for major amendments to the General Plan.

1. Major Amendments may be initiated by the City or may be requested by private individuals or agencies in accordance with the procedures set forth by the State Statutes.
2. Applications for major amendments shall be presented at a public hearing and considered by the Mesa City Council only at one time per calendar year.
3. All applications for major amendments must be submitted in the same calendar year they are heard.
4. A 2/3rd majority vote of the City Council is required for approval of major amendments.
5. Each major amendment shall meet or exceed citizen participation standards set by the City of Mesa in accordance with ARS 461.06, including the requirement that two Planning and Zoning Board public hearings be held at different locations, prior to the City Council public hearing.
6. It shall be the burden of the applicant for the amendment to prove that the change constitutes an improvement to the General Plan.

14.2.3 Major Amendment Approval Requirements

The City Council may approve an application for a major amendment only if it makes the following findings:

1. The Major Amendment constitutes an overall improvement to the General Plan.
2. The Major Amendment is consistent with the intent of the General Plan and other adopted plans, policies, and ordinances.
3. The Major Amendment will not adversely impact the community as a whole or a portion of the community by:
 - a. Significantly altering existing land use patterns
 - b. Causing significantly increased traffic on the existing roadway network, and
 - c. Degrading the health and safety of the residents.
4. A property owner of one parcel may not subdivide or split property into smaller areas in order to avoid the major amendment requirements.

14.2.4 Minor Amendment

Any change that does not meet the above criteria defining a Major Amendment shall be considered a Minor Amendment. Minor amendments can be considered by the Planning staff, Planning and Zoning Board, and City Council in accordance with the regularly scheduled process as prescribed by the Arizona Revised Statutes.

14.3 Updates to the General Plan

The General Plan is a flexible and dynamic document. It describes the recommended direction for the City based on an analysis of conditions that exist and are projected to occur in the future. As conditions change, updates and changes to the plan will be needed.

The City's Planning Division and the Planning and Zoning Board have the primary responsibility to assess the need for such updates. The provisions of the plan will be monitored on an annual basis to ensure the continuing validity of the goals, objectives, and policies. The implementation measures will be reviewed to determine their effectiveness and to identify needed changes and enhancements. Relationships among the related master plans will be monitored. In general, depending on the rate of growth and other changes in the community, the Mesa General Plan will require a comprehensive revision and update every ten years.